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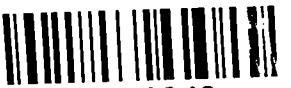
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THE

POLISH STRUGGLE:

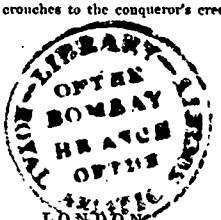
A FRAGMENT.

By M. G. KENNEDY.

52739

"O! he would rather houseless roam,
Where freedom and his God might lead;
Than be the sleekest slave at home,
That crouches to the conqueror's creed."

MOORE.



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LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN,
AND LONGMAN.

1836.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following fragment, which has been written some time, was originally intended as an episode to a larger work, which has been abandoned in consequence of the gaunt demand there is now for the efforts of the Muse. I have, nevertheless, been induced to send it forth into the world, in humble aid of the good cause which it is intended to serve. As such, it may receive that fostering indulgence, of which its manifold imperfections stand so much in need.

Allow me briefly to return my cordial thanks to the Editors of the *Times*, the *Athenæum*, the *Sheffield Iris*, *York Courant*, *Durham Advertiser*, and many others, but these in

particular, (all personal strangers to me) for the very kind encouragement held out when noticing a former poem of mine. It was the Editor of the *Athenæum* who expressed a wish to "see and hear of me again;"* and here I am once more, after a lapse of nearly four years, to bring up my "*lee-way*," and upon a "*weather tack*."

M. G. K.

* March 3, 1832.

INTRODUCTORY LINES.

To M******

Albeit of late I strung my harp for one
Too soon, alas! the tenant of a tomb;
Let me forget, (if *that* may *now* be done,)
And cast aside perforce my wonted gloom,
To gaze with joy on thee. Thy young eyes smile,
And on thy brow a cherub's image dwells:
And conscious joy, young, laughing-dimpled, tells
Thou hast no cares, no sorrows, and no guile.
Thy heart is now all purity;—the shrine
Of innocence and happiness;—but mine
Hath grief's dark dowry—may it ne'er be thine.
Sweet bond of love departed,—if to thee,
Smiling before me, I now tune my lay;
'Tis that I love thee deep and tenderly,
And none that fervent love shall dare gainsay.

To thee, my early song would I bequeath,
And when my pulse shall cease to beat, and death
Chill the quick fire which animates my breast,
In that long, quiet, and unceasing rest,
That sweet and dreamless sleep:
If thou shouldst cast thine eye upon my page,
When judgment ripens with thy ripening age,
Perchance thou'lt sigh, perchance a tear thou'lt weep
For hapless Poland, as thy sire hath done.
For she hath firmly stood,
Mid patriot blood,
A beacon to all time, though darkly, now,
Hath set in night her eagles' glorious sun.
Yet in the west I see a vivid glow,
E'en such as beam'd on thee, proud Marathon!
For these are kindred spirits with the free,
Who prouder would have made thy day, Thermopylæ!

* * * * * *

Poles! may that beam arise upon the world,
And light thy eagle-scroll to victories unfurl'd!

THE POLISH STRUGGLE.

A FRAGMENT.

I.

WARSAW is fallen!—fallen!—ere she fell,
Her moats were fill'd with countless heroes slain:
Few—few survive, that bloody tale to tell!—
Shall it with mournful heart be told in vain?
Now shall the nations feel a despot's reign;
Now shall the world more monstrous murders see;—
Forg'd is the fetter—rivetted the chain—
Though scarce 'tis cool, yet doom'd, alas! to be
A shackle meet to gall the noblest of the free.

II.

Forth, from the dark abyss of death and night,
Riding on murky vapours, dank and chill,
The monster's spirit sped, to crush and blight
The rising energies of freedom's will.
Her children's blood, I weet, he lov'd to spill;
Nor human laws, nor laws divine, could bar
The soul's innate, interminable ill:
While thankless myriads (1) looking on afar,
Saw might usurping right—waging unequal war.

III.

"*Shame to thee, Gaul!*"—the master-spirit sung:—
"*Shame to thee, Gaul!*"—th' echoing world replies.—
And is thine harp, Niemcewicz, unstrung?
Or sleeps thy soul, when to the very skies
In plaintive voice, thy prostrate country cries?
Awake!—awake!—Did great Kosciusko bleed,
And by thy side, in vain?—thy lyre denies
Too long—too late—the tributary meed,
And weeping Poland feels her cause is lost indeed!

IV.

Say, is her sword now sheath'd?—O! never, no!
Nor is it broken, neither is the edge
So dull, that it were wisdom to forego
The hope that sanctifies the solemn pledge
Of vengeance—now their only privilege.
Niemcewicz, awake! thy song shall rouse (2)
The sleepless spirit, and its pinions fledge
For glorious flight; for still each bosom glows
That lives, and deep within, the secret fountain flows.

V.

Tell them, ye men of Gaul! it was for you
Two hundred thousand Polish warriors shed (3)
Their dear hearts' blood; for they were ever true—
Witness the graves of brethren—fathers dead—
Who in your van all boldly, proudly led
Where scarce ye dared to follow;—witness all
Who saw them in Columbia, where they bled—
Who saw them nobly win, or proudly fall,
In Europe—Afric—aye! shame, shame, ye men of Gaul!

VI.

Nor shame alone be yours: who feels remorse
More deadly keen than he who yields his breast
To base ingratitude? On him the curse
Hangs like the Centaur's poison'd, leprous vest,
Whose power not strength Herculean could arrest.
Gaul yet shall mourn her heartless apathy,
Though Britain may her policy attest;
Gaul yet shall mourn,—and distant ages see
The Polish Eagle rise, replum'd and fearfully.

VII.

Time hath no leaden wing!—on—on he flies,
Outstripping all but crime. The evil hour
Of life lives to its latest day—it never dies—
And is an epitaph upon a tower
Of brass, that rust can ne'er devour.
Man's nobler acts may fade—their summer hue
Withers as withereth the summer's flower;
But crime outlives its age, and will pursue
Its victim to the tomb, as grisly vampires do.

VIII.

That Nero lives, the records of his clime
Affirm ; but Nero lives beyond the page
That tells his name—he lives in blackest crime;
And 'tis the equal task of youth and sage,
Whose swelling hearts throb with a venial rage,
To execrate his name ;—so shall it be,
(Thou miscreant whom no pity can assuage,)
When thou art dust, so shall it be with thee—
Murder shall mark thy name,—thou CZAR OF CRUELTY !

IX.

Monster in human form !—thy veins o'erflow
With the black blood which animates the fiend ;
Nurs'd in her lap, thou soon wert taught to know,
E'en ere thy lips were from thy mother wean'd,
Thy hateful being's object, aim and end.
Born, fed and nurtur'd thus, no marvel thou,
With passions dark, and heart diseas'd,—gangren'd,—
Should'st be the wretch thou art—the gory glow
That stain'd thy swaddling clouts now stains thy ferine brow!

X.

Down with the Despot!—let him lick the dust,
To which he *must* return a worthless grain:
Down with the Despot!—if there yet be trust
In man; but man hears the appeal in vain,
Mocking with fruitless sympathy:—why feign
Such idle grief, withholding power to save?
It is hypocrisy's deceitful bane,—
The rottenness that tenants the cold grave,
Whose outward form seems fair, because ye gild and lave!

XI.

Niemcewicz! a wandering minstrel boy—
Unknown, unlov'd—will boldly grasp thy lyre,
To strike one note, albeit of hope and joy,
And snatch one spark of thy immortal fire!
His be the war-note! and his high desire
To wake the slumber of the master-hand.
O! if thy genius might his breast inspire,
He would the song of daring deed command,
Whose faintest echo rings like thunder o'er the land:—

XII.

That they who live should hear and tremble too :
The sleeper rouse from death-like apathy :
The pigeon-liver'd, mean-soul'd craven, who
Fights o'er his cups Quixotic—even he,
For once a hero and a man should be.
No dulcet notes symphonious may become
The warrior's wakeful song—his minstrelsy
Rings with the clarion—rattles with the drum ;—
His war-note tells of wrong, and who, when wrong'd, is dumb ?

POLISH WAR SONG.

1.

His miscreant fingers are daub'd with the blood
Of our sons and our sires, yet he liveth and reigns :—
Our kingdom is delug'd with one gory flood,
Which pours forth in torrents, and sweepeth our plains :—
While the sons of the Gaul calmly look from afar,
And smile at the Despot—vindictive in war :
But honour and glory are ours, though we fall,
While the nations of earth cry—"*O ! shame to thee, Gaul!*"

2.

And the cry shall go forth to the ends of the world,
And fill ev'ry mouth with loud curses on thee;
Wherever the flag of proud Freedom's unfurl'd,
Thy boasted tri-colour a by-word shall be,
Where the stripes and bright stars are exalted on high—
Where the crescent still beams, or the eagles still fly,
From the scorch'd tropic plain to grim Woden's white wall,
There shall echo unceasing—"*O! shame to thee, Gaul!*"

3.

'Twas in Spain where we led your vanguard to the fight,
Nor quail'd when we stood to the bold triple band:
In Egypt we conquer'd, though great was their might—
For firm was each heart, and well tried was each brand:
On the world's widest field did our proud eagle fly—
For *you* did we conquer—for *you* did we die:
But ye basely deserted us! Soon then shall fall
Remorse and repentance, and—"*Shame on thee, Gaul!*"

4.

When the spirit of Freedom among ye first dawn'd,
And your school-boys achiev'd what ye faintly desir'd;
We saw and admir'd them—for there is enthron'd
In our hearts a pure spirit, by Freedom inspir'd.
Then we rose as one man; but the tyrant was strong,
And vain was our struggle, though stubborn and long:
But faith ye had none, for ye cried one and all,
'Huzza for the Tyrant!'—"*O! shame to thee, Gaul!*"

5.

Shall the thought dwell within us, and shall we not speak?—
Shall a Pole still survive, and in silence repine?—
No!—the loud execration indignant shall break
From his lips, though the humblest and last of his line:—
For our nobles still live, though in exile they be;
And our cause it but sleepeth, for we are the FREE!
In bondage, in exile,—whate'er may befal,
YE are SLAVES!—WE are FREEMEN!—"*O! shame to thee, Gaul!*"

6.

Our children are exiles—our fathers in chains!—
Yet the patriot-spirit sinks not though o'erthrown:—
The blood of the free will still channel their veins,
Our cause and our country will still be their own!—
Our nobles may sorrow, but hope yet inspires;—
And nature will point to our children their sires;—
Nor distance,—nor time,—nor oppression shall thrall—
They shall still rise triumphant, despite of thee, Gaul!

XIII.

But 'tis in vain we mock the patriot's cause;
We speak, applaud, exhort, and sing in vain.
Where is thy genius, Britain?—Wherefore pause,
Fool'd by this Northern Ogre, whose profane
And nauseous breath commands thee? (4) Rise again!—
There was a time thy daring spirit lov'd
To shield the helpless when wrongs bade them plain;
But now in stupor thou look'st on, unmov'd;—
A nation paralys'd—rebuk'd—by fear reprov'd!

XIV.

Let giddy France her musty banner keep
For moths to feed on, whilst each honest league
Of faith, and worth, and right, and honour sleep:—
Let her doat on,—(base offspring of intrigue)—
Slight, scorn, and shun her firmest allies' brigue;—
Let her forget her one great glorious feat,
Which Poland followed; and herself fatigue
With silken holiday;—no more shall beat
Within her heartless breast that hope which makes death sweet.

XV.

But Britain's sons can no such feelings know:—
Witness her page of history; and there,
One long undying register will show
Her sons were valiant—or to do, or dare!—
And if her daughters of the earth's MOST FAIR,
Have suckled children who forgot their sires—
Who calmly see the Miscreant's fingers tear
From patriot breasts, hearts, liberty inspires,—
Shame on the age that lacks its bright ancestral fires!

XVI.

Warsaw is fallen!—mourn ye, sons of earth,
Who feel your nature from the God-head springs;
In whose proud bosoms Freedom erst had birth—
Owning a sway beyond the power of kings—
Soaring beyond all sublunary things:—
Who know—who feel—that when the tyrant's hand
Strikes—'tis at all;—for freedom ever clings
Unto itself alone—each cause, each heart, each hand,
Where'er, whate'er it be, bows to one high command.

XVII.

And though awhile the patriot's cause may sleep,
'Tis like the ocean's summer lullaby,
Courting the breath of heaven to swell the deep
Unfathomable waves of liberty;—
Which once arous'd, let vaunting tyranny
Tremble—her vessel of unhallow'd freight,
Unballasted, unmann'd, a wreck shall be,
E'en on that shore, whence in its pride of might,
It joyous spread its sail to wage th' unholy fight,

XVIII.

Uprose the sun in dusky mantle clad,
As though he mourn'd that fatal coming day:
And Nature round seem'd withering, cold, and sad,
Unblest, uncheer'd, by his supernal ray:
The murmuring waters of the Vistula
Roll'd sluggish on, as though her billows slept—
Save where they kiss'd the drooping willow's spray,
Which on her placid bosom gently swept,
While heaven's fresh balmy dews in silent sorrow wept.

XIX.

And on the margin of that stream there grows
The giant poplar, whose aspiring head,
With native pride shoots forth its verdant boughs—
The archetype of spirits that have sped.
'Beautiful tree!—the lov'd, the lost, the dead,
Have gaz'd on thee, and lov'd thee, and are gone—
Thus do I gaze and love; and when my head
Full low is laid, I'd ask no sculptur'd stone
To mark the spot, couldst thou record the hapless one.'

XX.

Thus mus'd the youthful Pole, as o'er his vest
He buckled on the belt—no more to be
By his own hand remov'd;—within his breast
Forebodings sad—such as in dreams we see,
When unknown lips like dark fatality,
Appear to breathe words mournful to the heart;
As sweeps the wind all sad and tenderly,
O'er the Æolian strings—at which we start,
As though some unseen power a mystery did impart.

XXI.

He fought—he fell—he bled—he died!—No more?—
Where stands his monument?—The hearts of men!
These are the tablets—ay!—their inmost core—
On which his epitaph, by glory's pen,
In sunbeams is inscribed, for those to ken
Who now are tenants of the womb of time.
Yes! distant ages shall applaud them, when
All selfish policy shall be deem'd as crime,
And truth and honour reign triumphant and sublime.

XXII.

'Twas on that fatal morn, beside that stream,
A maid unweeting of her lover's doom—
Quitting her feverous couch and troublous dream,
Had sought the morning's solitary gloom ;—
And all around appear'd a living tomb ;—
The dim earth breathing into day and light,
Awoke to one dull, ceaseless, busy hum
Of crowding hosts preparing for the fight :—
How heavy on her heart it fell with leaden weight!

XXIII.

It is a solemn sight to see array'd
In gorgeous grandeur on the battle plain,
The gathering legions, whose unhallow'd trade
Is kindred blood :—shall the red ruthless reign
Of murders foul, legitimiz'd 'mong men,
For ever be ?—their toil ?—their livelihood ?
Honour, and glory, and renown, all vain,
But dreadful names : for 'tis in waves of blood
The conqueror wades for fame, and calls his cause the good.

XXIV.

When He, whose blessed life brought hope to man—
Hope erst rejected—angels sang on high
Peace and good-will to all!—'twas thus began
His life, and holy deeds of charity
Mark'd a bright path, which hate could ne'er belie.—
His life was peace, and wheresoe'er he taught,
His precepts all were peace;—and when to die,
By wicked condemnation he was brought,
His parting words were peace,—and peace his parting thought!

XXV.

Thy arts, Bellona, when in honour's cause
Shall meet fit guerdon, and with their surcease
Catch proud success,—maintain a nation's laws,—
Repel th' Invader,—or establish peace:—
Confirm the right of Nature's charter'd lease,
Freedom, man's birthright!—but no more,—no more!—
Who wageth war for lust, or would increase
His realm's estate or wealth with human gore,
Hath heritage of Cain—the mark and curse of yore.—

XXVI.

On with the tale—though weeps the recreant muse,
And shrinks from such unhallow'd register:—
On with the tale—for see, a tear bedews
Yon lovely maiden's cheek, and 'tis with her
Our hearts are wandering to administer
The little comfort life may yet bestow:
But all in vain—a passing villager,
Wending his course, hath whisper'd her; and now
The flush is on her cheek—the wan-weird marks her brow.

XXVII.

It is enough!—her ear hath drank the tale:—
A moment dumb and motionless she stands—
Her blue eyes fix'd on earth, and her thin, pale,
And quivering lips mutter unheard commands:—
And see, to heaven her supplicating hands
Are cast, and claspt in meekness; but her heart—
Her gentle heart—to bursting now expands:
It is enough:—swift as the hurtl'd dart
Or wind speeds sightless on, or springs the bounding hart,

XXVIII.

With madden'd pace she quits that hallow'd scene,
Where now no more as lovers they shall meet;
And rushing to the city, (which hath been
A home—a home no more—for who shall greet
Her now with happy smile and welcome sweet?—)
She hears the dismal tale of yesterday;
She sees the gathering crowds in every street,
In solemn parley of the coming fray:
For near the city-walls the fiery cannons play.

XXIX.

Who shall be idle now? The ruffian rout
With fiend-like clamour charge the entrenchments round
Their hope is plunder,—their reward—the knout:
So on they press, and piecemeal force their ground.
But every step a patriot's heart is found,
And he who winneth such hath dangerous toil—
Nor scatheless wins—witness this gory soil;
Witness the thousand groans that swell the fierce turmoil.

XXX.

The heavens are black, and with the murky clouds
The wreathing mists of smoke are mingling fast,
Borne on the eddying wind: the shouting crowds,
Whose war-notes roll like thunders on the blast,
Rush on impetuous; as when forced at last,
By swollen waters the rude throam bursts forth,
And earthly aid is powerless:—thus was cast
The die for thee, poor Poland! whilst thy worth
And valour gorg'd their glut—grim Ogres of the North!

XXXI.

Too sure his skill, who planted on yon steep
(So dearly bought) the cannon's dire array:—
Too sure his skill who marshals them to keep
Their fiery strength 'mid the tempestuous fray
To one unceasing aim;—see the dismay,
(Such as they feel, who fear not though they fall,)
Upon the cheeks of the beleagur'd play;
For now they hear the trembling, tottering wall
Rumble beneath their feet to each unerring ball.

XXXII.

The breach is gained—look up to heaven for grace,
Ye madden'd combatants, for man is now
All pitiless and fearful—in his face
Ye read the demon,—and his pallid brow
Fierce hate, and rage, and ruthless anger plough:
All evil is his heart,—as black as hell,
Illumin'd by the sulphurous flash, whose glow
But serves to light up horrors such as dwell
Where hope can never come, and fear sends forth its yell.

XXXIII.

Bravely that hand hath dar'd the single fight—
Tartar and Russ have felt the dinted blade;—
Its work of death is done—fail'd in its might,
Broken and useless by its warrior laid—
Sheathless, but powerless.—'Full well hast thou play'd
Thy part,' he sighs in death's last agony;
'Thy country thanks thee, and my soul's repaid:—
Now on her bosom let mine ashes lie;
My work-day toils are o'er:—Poland, for thee I die!'

XXXIV.

Such were the hero's words: no longer now
With conscious life he breathes, but writhes in pain;
The clammy sweat is oozing from his brow,
And his lips quiver, as each sinking vein
Recedes and ebbs; and round his whirling brain
The world rocks, as if earthquakes rent its breast,
And nature in convulsions heav'd amain;—
Strange, awful prelude to so sweet a rest!
Yet such the ebon door to mansions of the blest.

XXXV.

Where sleeps Sobieski?—Poniatowski?—where
Rests in his honor'd shade a nation's pride,
The great Kosciusko? Earth too well could spare
A span of mould where now their relics bide!
But Ossa huge heap'd upon Pelion's side,
Or Chimborazo pil'd on Himaleh,
From the world's wond'rous gaze can never hide
Their deathless glories: no—poor mother clay
Claims but her own again;—the soul hath brighter day!

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XXXVI.

'Tis not the tenant of the earth alone,
Though here her powers are proud and manifest;
Far better hopes when earthly hopes are gone
Illume the fading embers of the breast.
And new existence springs from earthly rest.
Yes, there are whisperings heard in solitude,
And secret thoughts which brave all other test;
That maugre worldly pleasures will be woo'd,
And blest, in sooth, is he, who loves o'er these to brood!

XXXVII.

It is the consciousness that can defy
And put to shame the cold world's selfishness;
A being of an order pure as high,
Whose aspirations scorn the lowliness
Of grovelling minds, and giant-born suppress
The erring vanities of all around:
He spurns their pride—pities their littleness—
Forgives their envy;—e'en when malice frown'd
Upon his lips the smile benignant still was found.

XXXVIII.

Such are the master-spirits of the age
Who raise humanity, exalt our state,
Our nature, and ourselves. 'Tis these assuage
Man's brutal passions, and him elevate,
And teach him to be good, and wise, and great.
Such was Skrejnetski!—and where is he now?
Where is Skrejnetski?—at the city's gate
The miscreant's hordes are battering—every blow
Echoes the answer back—Skrejnetski, where art thou?(5)

XXXIX.

"Away—away!"—the genius of the land
Murmurs, and on the blast the sound is borne.
"Away—away!"—far from his native land,
In exile—penury—by anguish worn;
Whilst his poor country bleeds, by bloodhounds torn,
Who growl exultingly to think that he
Who might alone uphold them sighs forlorn,
A victim now to jaundic'd jealousy:—
Yet formed alone for deeds of noblest chivalry.

XL.

The fight is lost, and won; the bastions now
Are forc'd and gain'd,—and crowds are rushing in
Impetuous, like the tides that roaring flow
Upon the Goodwin shoals with ceaseless din,
When Cynthia hides her light, or doth begin,
In full orb'd radiance o'er the wide expanse
To shed effulgence; and his magazine
Stern Boreas bursteth ope in dissonance,
At which the seaman starts, and quails at fortune's chance.

XLI.

'The fight is lost, and won!'—the Victor cries;—
His shout triumphant rings along the line;
While the poor vanquish'd hero prostrate lies,
Cold as the clay on which his limbs recline.
The last dread desperate act is done! the mine
Is fir'd, and hurtle high in colliëd air
The mountain fragments, as from earth's confine
The flaming crater bursts with ruddy glare,
And heaven and earth alike destruction's livery wear.

XLII.

Impetuous to the charge they rush—'tis done—
'Tis o'er!—the lengthen'd line no more is seen
From north to south extending, or in one
Indomitable mass, like birds unclean
Swooping above their prey—as o'er the scene
Rings wide their clamorous joy;—that hour is past,
And savage horror reigneth now, I ween:
See in each street a fray,—while stand aghast
The mingling hosts;—for *now*, is Poland's day o'ercast.

XLIII.

At every turn the wounded and the dead
Are scattered round:—a wretch hath crawl'd to lay
His quivering limbs and drooping bleeding head
Within the portico whose bolts obey
No summons from without; the dying may
Seek other solace now; the crowded roof
Arm'd all with ready missiles watch their prey,—
No time for parleying, sith hearts are proof
To pity's gentle call—and mercy stands aloof.

XLIV.

See there !—yon livid, hideous, lifeless pile
Of corses mangl'd and unseemly, bore
A living, bleeding burthen : for awhile
With fury round he gaz'd, and all was o'er ;
Another grinn'd with agony, and tore
His clotted locks in madness, ere he died—
Digging his fierce nails in the earth, where gore
Conceal'd the loam beneath ; and then he cried
To heaven for vengeance—earth that earnest boon denied.

XLV.

Behold another !—who would deem that he
With placid smile, and hand whose gentle wave
Beckons to yonder balcony, must be
So soon the tenant of an "undug grave ?"
Sweet be thy slumbers, boy ;—the gallant, brave,
And lovely fair have bitter tears for thee ;
The boon of life, the prize of love ye gave—
These were thy all—resign'd all cheerfully :—
For poor were love and life, to pine in slavery !

XLVI.

War's desolations—murder, rapine twine
Their power resistless, and the sacred veil
Of virtue wide is riven, and her shrine
By sacrilegious hands profan'd—while pale
With unslak'd appetite the fiends regale
In tapestried halls now drear and desolate,
Save when the curse and laughter loud prevail:—
And savage hordes in savage accents prate—
Some in harsh tones of wrath—some in dark words of hate.

XLVII.

Dreadful the cry that rings the city through,
Strown with the happy and unconscious dead,
Or conscious bleeding, breathing, living, who
Resign all hope sith mercy far hath fled.
The widow's child on death's cold lap is laid;
The grey-beard's prop in age hath pass'd away;
The orphan's cry is drent amid the tread
Of prancing hoofs and clattering arms, whose bray
Is heard at every turn—Blood marks the soldier's way!—

XLVIII.

Blood—blood!—with tears commingled!—gaily shout,
Ye danglers dight around the lap of fame,
Who trim yourselves in lace and gold, and flout
In all the gay caparison of flame
And blood and tears, to keep or win a name.
Toss high your plumes, ye crowing chanticleers,
Assert your prowess amid loud acclaim;
Yours is a glorious path which man reveres—
A path of blood ye win,—and make a home for tears!—

XLIX.

Ay, many a happy hearth and dwelling once
Shall be a mourning tabernacle now;
And many a maiden's heart with fearful nonce,
Shall cling and break, and floods of sorrow flow
Where late in merriment and jocund show
They met, blest partners of life's joys and cares.
Those hours have pass'd away—life's sunny glow
Is dimm'd with many a cloud—such grief is theirs
That life reluctant sags, as still the load it bears.

L.

Dreadful the carnage Poland's children saw,
When Warsaw fell in the unequal fight:—
Let those who witness such dark horrors draw
All the mind's madden'd eye can see in light
Too vivid for the minstrel to indite:
Wild as the winds—dire as the lightning's flash—
Deep as the thunder's roll, 'mid blackest night—
Dread as the raging waves that seething dash
Against the yielding wreck, with loud, unceasing lash.

LI.

These are the common elements of life;
We see them, hear them, feel them, fear them, too!
But there is something more in human strife,
And gushing blood is ever fearful,—new!—
We deal with death but once—to be—to do—
All the realities of life pass on
With noisy changes: death alone we view
With feelings ne'er described:—'tis well to con
The mystery hidden now, to be reveal'd anon.

LII.

Life is the link of time: it is a bond
Drawn by the hand of God: it is a tie
Form'd by His will omnipotent—beyond
We know not: heaven and earth—eternity
And time—these things are all a mystery:—
And such is life—a fragile link that knits
The sheeted dead with those who yet may be:—
'Tis an unceasing chain that ever flits
Uncheck'd, unchang'd, yet changing ne'er remits.

LIII.

But man—proud vaunting man—who knoweth not
Himself, hath sought to scan the realms of space;
Exalts a throne on earth's remotest spot,
And rears a cenotaph in every place,
As though he liv'd the paragon of each race—
And such perforce he is; but vanity,
And pride, and pomp, and passions—these debase
His nature and his name; he seeks to be,
And thinks himself a god;—a worm cries—"*Yes, for me!*"

LIV.

And do we boast of reason, and abjure
Her creed, her morals, and her nobleness?
Talk we of wisdom's schools, and not ensure
The virtues we assume, with which we dress
Withal so gay our very nothingness?
Come—strip thyself of borrowed plumes, and see
In truth's bright mirror thy poor nakedness—
The instinct of the brute compar'd to thee
Is reason, in despite of thy philosophy.

LV.

But close we now the scenes of mortal strife;
The hour of murder passeth quick away.
The grave is clos'd, and things of peaceful life
Now fill the scene; the sward is green as May,
And blithely lilts all frolicksome and gay
The villager, who seeks his home among
The waving crops, gold ears, and scented hay;
The linnet chirps—the mavis yields his song,
And love, and hope, and joy, now animate the throng.

LVI.

But there are hearts that throb—nor throb in vain;—
And there are hands yet ready for the deed;
And Britain yet may lead the fearless train,
For she hath sons who long to do,—and bleed;—
In whom exist the everlasting seed,
From which the scions of fair freedom's tree
Alone may spring. God prosper them in need:—
That Warsaw's children yet once more may see
Poland arise again, among the nations free!

LVII.

But hark! there comes a wail:—"It is the cry
Of women,"—and in bitterness of woe.
Th' incarnate fiend condemns a maid to die
Beneath the ruffian-stripe; and every blow
Seems balm unto his soul:—black miscreant, go!
The song is rais'd;—the shout, though deaf ye be,
Of retribution rings;—the world's thy foe:
And now through every clime, o'er land and sea,
Proud Poland's watchword spreads:—it is,—"*Humanity!*"

SONG.

"POLAND IS NOT LOST YET." (6)

1.

"*Poland is not lost yet!*"
Wake,—wake the song:—
Though her hopes be crost, yet
Still,—still they're strong.
Youths and maidens, raise your voices,
Freedom breathes and Hope rejoices!
"Poland is not lost yet!"

2.

Giddy France may slumber,
Reckless and cold:—
Britain may not number
Her sons with the bold.
Youths and maidens, sing, nor heed 'em;
Raise the shout,—Hurra! for Freedom!
"Poland is not lost yet!"

3

Let the demon-tyrant,
Hateful and vile,
(With heart of hardest adamant,)
Humanity defile.
Though he spill our blood, like water,
Revelling 'mid human slaughter:—
Poland is not lost yet.

4.

*Murderer!** we arraign thee
Before the GOD of all!
He listens to our 'plain, He
Answers to our call:
And His threat'nings speak in thunder,
Which shall rend thy realm asunder:—
Poland shall be free then.

* However severe the language in the text may appear, it is strictly in accordance with the ferocious and atrocious acts of barbarity recorded against the Ruffian-Czar! (See note 6.)

5.

" Poland is not lost yet!"

Wake,—wake the song:

Though her hopes be crost, yet

Still,—still they're strong.

Youths and maidens! raise your voices,

Freedom breathes, and Hope rejoices!

" Poland is not lost yet!"

LVIII.

Land of the brave, farewell!—it is for thee

I tune my harp, albeit in vain I sing;—

Could I awake one note of minstrelsy

To cheer thee in thy bondage;—could I bring

One hope to animate thee, like the spring

In deserts found, 'twould be my fervent joy:

But, woe is me! in vain I strike the string—

In vain my passing hours for thee employ:

The tyrant's foot is strong—'tis on thee, to destroy!

LIX.

Land of the fair:—one parting note, though sad,
At Beauty's shrine, whilom to bend the knee
The youthful poet lov'd : how would it glad
His fervent soul to wake the song for thee,
Whose notes should speak of love and liberty ;
" And sing of hope, beside the fount of tears !"(7)
Full well he recks such transport may not be :
Yet on the lowering cloud (the veil of years,)
The iris spreads her span, though dim it now appears.

LX.

Smile on—still smile !—thy smiles alone may nerve
The exile, in whose bondage thou may'st share.
Smile on—still smile !—thy smiles shall long preserve
The sacred cause, and many a tongue will dare,
Maugre the festering bonds the limbs may bear,
To talk of liberty amid the gloom
Of bleak Siberia's snows :—yes, even there
Thy smiles shall animate, revive, relume,
And shed a halo light around their living tomb.

LXI.

What though the cup of life be fill'd full high,
And misery's drop defiles it to the brim;
There is an antidote in woman's sigh,
Which o'er the bane like nectar'd balm will swim;
And her sweet words, like seraph's sweetest hymn,
Come melting to the soul with heavenly breath:—
O! could no visions false such raptures dim,
No fickle thoughts arrest them in their faith;
Then might the doating soul find triumph e'en in death.

LXII.

Proud land of science!—proud thou well may'st be;
Proud of thy daughters, good as they are fair;
Proud of thy sons, dere (8) foes to tyranny;
Proud of thy child,—creation's god-like heir—
The sage Copernicus! (9) by whom the fair
Bright stars of glory in their paths of light
Were first proclaim'd, though bigotry's fell snare
Stood at his feet: his was the mind of might—
"It turns, it turns," he cried, "in persecution's spite!"

LXIII.

Yes! it will turn in persecution's spite,
As it hath turn'd since erst its course begun:
A world of beauty, loveliness, and light,
Fed by heaven's dews; and nourish'd by its sun:
And so 'twill turn when our career is done,
When "dust to dust" crowns our mortality:
And unborn ages have their cycles run:
When persecution, hate, and bigotry,
In "cold obstruction" rot with prostrate tyranny.

LXIV.

Peace! to the manes of departed souls:—
Hope! to all breathing, animated dust:—
Love! to the friends we've cherish'd o'er our bowls:—
But smiling scorn for every broken trust!—
Forgetfulness of wrongs!—for these we must
Forget, if peace and happiness we seek;
And charity would prompt forgiveness just;
Yet still contumely will spurn the meek,
And scorn, with bitter sneer, point out the smitten cheek.

LXV.

Poland, farewell!—the bard, reluctant, quits
The theme that tells thy wrongs and sufferings,
Thy valour and renown:—the pageant flits.
But when he strikes again the mystic strings
Of Poesy, to wake imaginings;
Oh! may his pencil dipped in heavenly beams,
Record thy freedom brought on healing wings:
Firmer than mountains,—purer than thy streams,—
Bright as an exile's hopes,—and sweeter than his dreams.

EPITAPH

FOR THOSE POLES WHO FELL AT THE SIEGE OF WARSAW.

R. P.

The bravest of the brave—and of the free,
The noblest free—and best—
Repose in peace beneath :—they died for LIBERTY !
Back—back—poor Gallic *slave*,
Nor dare to tread upon the martyr's grave.
Yet if within thy breast
Aught of pure feeling reigns, still thou wilt sigh
Over their hapless destiny.—
But weep not for the dead,—they need no tear,
They seek no idle sympathy,
Who lie in glory's lap sepulchred here.
Weep for thyself, thou dizzy, giddy Gaul !
Weep for thy weakness, turpitude, and shame ;
Pass on——and when thou thinkest on their fall,
Blush for thy nature,—country,—and thy name !

NOTES.

NOTE 1. STANZA II. PAGE 2.

" While thankless myriads looking on afar,
Saw might usurping right—waging unequal war."

The ungrateful apathy which France evinced towards her brave, suffering, and persecuted allies, and her subsequent conduct towards them, when the "Hell-hound" proved victorious in arms, will be a stain on the character of that nation so long as its history shall have a record. Something generous, something noble was hoped for, and expected from her; instead of which, she displayed an apathy tantamount to treachery, of which it was scarcely supposed possible that her children could have been guilty. Well sung the master-mind

" O! shame to thee, land of the Gaul!"

NOTE 2. STANZA IV. PAGE 3.

" Niemcewicz, awake! thy song shall rouse—"

NIEMCEWICZ. This eminent, brave, and highly talented man " has shared from his early youth in every glorious effort to

sustain the fortunes of his country. While very young, being scarcely twenty, he was named as deputy from one of the districts of Courland, and was one of the most active members of that Diet, which, by the Constitution of 1790, attempted to restore the ancient glories of united Poland. The part which this youthful statesman performed on that memorable occasion established his reputation on a very solid foundation; for, not content with labouring to perfect the political institutions of his country, he aimed at making them rest on moral perfection. In this his success has been great, whether as a prose writer, or as one of the most exquisite of poets.

"So distinguished at an early age, he might without reproach have devoted himself to his intellectual pursuits; but literary fame faded into insignificance when his loved country was in peril. As soon as Kosciuszko* had put himself at the head of the insurrection to resist the splendid spoliation of the crowned anarchists, Niemcewicz joined the national standard, and was immediately selected as the friend and aide-de-camp of the commander-in-chief. Throughout the whole of that illustrious man's short, but brilliant career of resistance to the hordes of the northern Semiramis, the warrior-poet was his inseparable companion; and at that glorious, though unsuccessful struggle, which laid Poland prostrate at the feet of the invader, both fell. On the field of Macieiowice, after the battle, Kosciuszko was found nearly dead, and his aide-de-camp close by his side, most desperately wounded."—*Fletcher's Poland*, p. 483.

* Campbell pronounces this name as though of four syllables. He is good authority, but I believe in English it would be written thus—Ko-stsiu-shko, consequently the euphony of my lines will be found perfect.

NOTE 3. STANZA V. PAGE 3.

" Tell them, ye men of Gaul, it was for you
Two hundred thousand Polish warriors shed
Their dear heart's blood."

Barring the candour of an Althorp, and the foreign policy of a Palmerston, the Poles have ever spoken of the English with respect, and without murmuring. Latterly, this demonstration of feeling towards us has been most gratifying.

" We had," say they, " the sympathies of the British people with us, at least, in principle; and though we derived no benefits from England through her government, at the same time we had no right to expect them. But France, in whose cause, and in whose defence, *two hundred thousand* of our fathers and our brothers have died,—in Europe—Asia—and America! France, *whose advance guard* we formed!—France, whose revolution we supported by imitating it!—France has for ever lost us, and our love and sympathy! Let her look to the consequences."

NOTE 4. STANZA XIII. PAGE 10.

" Where is thy genius, Britain?—wherefore pause,
Fool'd by these northern Ogres, whose profane
And nauseous breath commands thee?"

" Britons never shall be slaves," has been said or sung hundreds and thousands of times in every city, town, village, and hamlet in the three kingdoms; but how unmeaning is the cry! We have long been talking of the emancipation of our fellow-men abroad, and something has at last been done; but the word seems to be but very indifferently understood at home.

Of whom are the poor misguided and misgoverned children of

Erin the slaves? Of their passions?—or their rulers? Of whom, even in this blessed country, are the lower orders (ground down and famishing,) the slaves? We shall not stop to moot the question. The ladder of slavery mounts higher, even to a nation, and that nation is—England! Of whom are Britons, the slaves? I answer in the words of the text;—slaves we are to the grim Ogres of the north, when we suffer the miscreants to gain the ascendant over us, as latterly they have done.

Have we not long been paying to the Autocrat at the rate of £1,000,000 per annum, under the false name of a Russian Dutch loan, when there has been neither claim nor obligation for our doing so? "What right," it has been justly asked, "has England to pay that sum, and what right has Russia to demand it?" The contract between England and Holland, and Russia, to pay a stipulated sum to the latter so long as Belgium and Holland remained united under the Dutch dynasty, limited the payment during the continuance of that union, and that it should cease and determine so soon as any partition should take place. The revolution of 1830, consummated a partition which "the Ogre" himself recognized, by a participation in the proceedings. Since that period, Holland rightly conceived the treaty at an end, but the British Government have continued the payment, and that out of the over-taxed industry of her population,—out of the pockets of a groaning and oppressed people. During his Chancellorship, Lord Althorp, in his "usual candid and insinuating manner," admitted the fact of the dissolution of the treaty, and intimated the policy of "advancing the money to Russia, *as a bribe* to keep the peace of Europe." Gracious Heaven!—Is freedom's battle fight to be conducted, arranged, and considered as a prize-fight, in which minister's bribes are to be taken for the crosses? By this very act we have made ourselves *tributary*,—that is the word,—*tributary!* to the haughty miscreant, who laughs at our policy, pities our weakness, and treats us with

insult and contumely. Britons, bow down to your masters, Nicholas and Constantine.

NOTE 5. STANZA XXXVIII. PAGE 23.

——— "SKREJNETSKI, where art thou?"

"*C'est un commandant qui commandera!*" Such are the memorable words pronounced by the immortal Napoleon on this extraordinary man, whose admirable prowess and distinguished services cannot be said to have received their meed of worth. To follow him through the varied chequers of an eventful history, would be a work of supererogation in the notes of a Fragment like the present. His early history hath already had honorable register, but since the fall of Warsaw, nothing has been publicly heard of him. "It is believed that he is now living, under another name, at Lintz in Austria, and highly praises the kind and hospitable treatment he experiences, both from individuals and the government. Besides a great number of privates, there are one thousand Polish officers in Galicia, who are treated with all the regard that is due to their misfortunes. It is possible they may remain in Austria, as the French legations refuse them passports for France, and they have declined the amnesty of the Emperor of Russia, chiefly because it is required as a condition that every officer shall give a declaration in writing, in which it is said there is an acknowledgment that they are rebels."

NOTE 6. PAGE 33.

——— "Poland is not lost yet."

The multiplied atrocities committed by the Autocrat and his ruffian-delegates, are so many outrages on human nature, so revolt-

ing to the feelings, and so disgusting to reflect upon, that we shudder as we read their extent. Fletcher, in his History of Poland, records an instance where "a boy only nine years of age, a son of Count Plater, had in the playfulness of childhood written in chalk on one of the forms,—'*The 3rd of May for ever!*' that being the anniversary of Kosciuszko's constitution. The fact was discovered by some of the innumerable spies, employed among even these infants, to Nowozilzoff, who instituted an inquiry among the boys:—not one would betray the poor child Plater: they were all ordered to be flogged with the utmost severity! The unhappy offender declared that he had written the offensive words. The grand duke condemned him to be a soldier for life, incapable of advancement in the army; and when his mother threw herself before his carriage, to implore forgiveness for her wretched child, he spurned her *like a dog* with his foot."

A lad, named Kalynski, only fourteen years of age, was sent into Russia, as a common soldier for life, for having taken off a branch of the tree, which shades the tomb of the brave Zawisza, who was hung by order of Paskewitsch.

At a time when incendiarism was frequent in St. Petersburgh, a servant girl found a letter in the street, in which a neighbour was threatened with having his house burned down that very night. She instantly flew to the devoted family, to give the alarm; and, after relating the story to her master, went to bed in a state of dreadful agitation. In the middle of a cold and stormy night, she was taken out of her bed by the police, and dragged, almost in a state of nudity, to the office, where she was severely knouted; and then thrust into prison, where she was kept without food for two days. Her crime was having warned the intended victims, instead of carrying the letter to the police. She had been delivered of a child only a day or two previously; her case may consequently be more easily imagined than described.

The following is but the act of yesterday. "Five students

were flogged in the open square, for reading the political works of Wilnatynska. A young lady was overheard singing '*Poland is not lost yet!*' when she was dragged to the guard-house, *and flogged!!* She died of shame and horror." These are sickening details, from which the mind shrinks with disgust, and keenly feels how far our nature is debased, when such crimes and murders are suffered to be perpetrated under the wicked plea that the brave and generous, though conquered Poles, are the revolting subjects of a rapacious, powerful, and cruel Invader. Thanks to the liberal age, that we in England can sing the song of Freedom; that our harps are not yet hung on the willows that weep over the streams of persecution and suffering; and that a British voice may fearlessly echo the song of the lovely martyr of Poland, and sing

'Poland is not lost yet!'

NOTE 7. STANZA LIX. PAGE 36.

"'And sing of hope, beside the fount of tears.'"

I prefer quoting this line, as it stands, from that exquisite little poem by T. K. Hervey, Esq., the "Grotto of Egeria," which I had not seen at the time this stanza was first composed. When the similarity of our verses was pointed out to me, I at once resolved to adopt that gentleman's version in preference to my own, which was originally written

And whisper comfort at the spring of tears.

I trust the gentle reader, as well as the courteous author alluded to, will pardon the offence, if any.

NOTE 8. STANZA LXII. PAGE 37.

"Proud of thy sons, dere foes to tyranny."

"Would I had met my derest foe in heaven,
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio."

SHAKSPEARE.

NOTE 9. STANZA LXII. PAGE 37.

" The sage Copernicus."

Poland justly boasts of having given birth to Copernicus. In the palace of the Luxembourg there is, I am informed, a fine painting, representing Copernicus in prison, pointing to a globe, and in the act of uttering the following words:

" Ils me persecutent, mais cependant elle tourne."

Wishing to be correct, and fancying my informant might have had his ideas running on the celebrated speech of Galileo's, I wrote to the Conservator on the subject, but received no reply. I must regret that this lack of courtesy should have left me uninformed. I must, however, in conclusion acknowledge my obligation to other sources to which I am indebted for information in my notes, particularly to M. C. BASZEZEWICZ, Secretary to the Committee of the Polish Society, for his very kind and prompt assistance.

THE END.

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